WITHDRAWING WITH HONOR: STRATEGIC LESSONS LEARNED FROM CASE STUDIES ON MILITARY WITHDRAWALS

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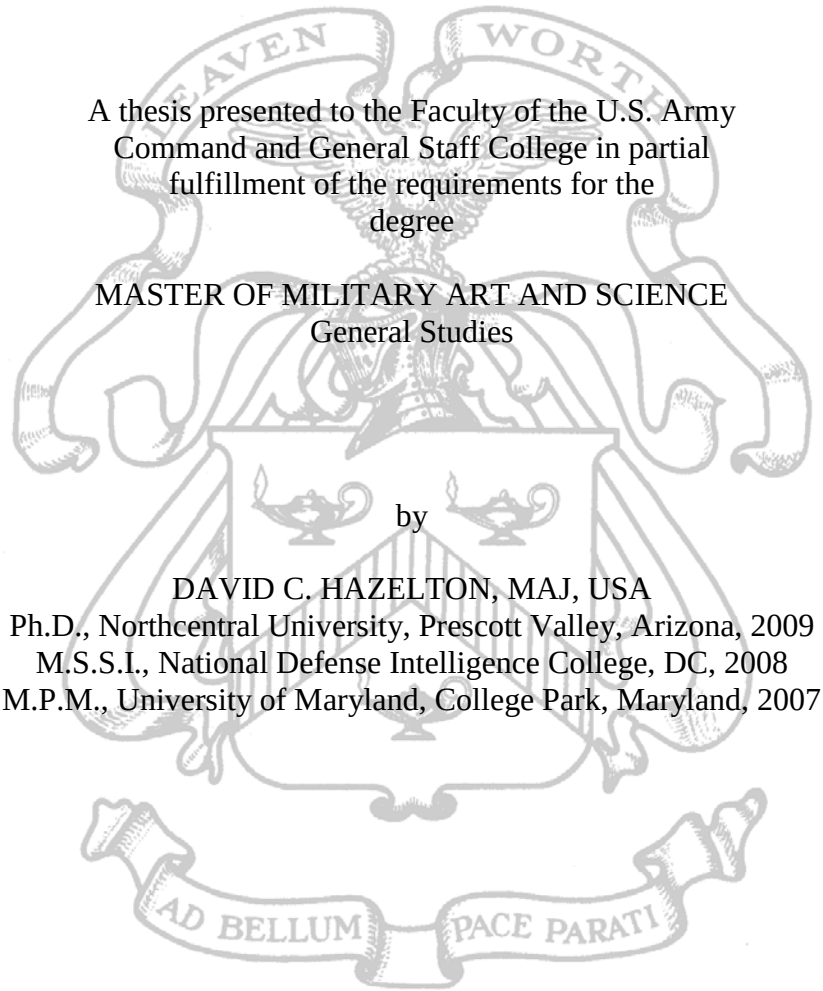

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

WITHDRAWING WITH HONOR: STRATEGIC LESSONS LEARNED FROM CASE STUDIES ON MILITARY WITHDRAWALS, by MAJ David C. Hazelton, 89 pages.

This thesis uses case studies to explore lessons learned from historic military withdrawals. Case studies included the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia. Although literature considering the decision to withdraw abounds, this study found a gap in how the strategic withdrawal strategy influences the well being of both nations. This study found the following trends across case studies: (1) protracted withdrawals risk being crippled by changing circumstances throughout the withdrawal, (2) although withdrawals often become delayed in hopes of ideal political solutions, these solutions rarely materialize and the delay instead worsens the conditions under which the final withdrawal is made, (3) negotiations with the enemy may secure a safe withdrawal yet hinders the occupying power's long-term interests, (4) the legitimacy of the internal government as perceived by the host nation is the most important factor in determining the long-term effect of the withdrawal on both nations, and (5) the long-term strategic effect on the occupying nation is rarely as significant as it appears when the withdrawal is being considered and conducted. Each trend yields significance for the planning of future withdrawals as parallels are found in historic withdrawals.

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ACRONYMS

NLF	National Liberation Front
UN	United Nations
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
U.S.	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> The military student does not seek to learn from history the minutiae of method and technique. . . . But research does bring to light those fundamental principles and their combinations and applications, which in the past, have been predictive of success.
>
> — General Douglas MacArthur

Background

After seven years of combat operations in Iraq, President Obama is proceeding with a plan to end the United States (U.S.) conventional combat mission by August of 2010 and withdraw all U.S. forces by the end of 2011 (Lothian and Malveaux 2009). The withdrawal of troops has been sharply contested ever since President Bush declared the end of major combat operations onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln on 1 May 2003 (CNN Washington Bureau 2003). However, U.S. Forces have remained in Iraq because this was viewed by policymakers as necessary for overall U.S. national security. Fear of the consequences of withdrawal from Iraq also abound, causing the protracted involvement of over 100,000 U.S. troops and a multi-billion dollar U.S. commitment. A similar set of circumstances exists regarding U.S. troops in Afghanistan, as nine years into Operation Enduring Freedom an ever-increasing number of U.S. troops remain deployed.

The debate over withdrawing from Iraq and Afghanistan rages in the United States between those with sharply divergent viewpoints. While some view the continuation of U.S. troop involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan as beneficial to U.S. interests, others fear the strategic impact of a withdrawal in the face of continued conflict,

and others think a withdrawal is necessary due to the high cost in terms of human and capital treasure. If the U.S. withdraws, do the insurgents therefore win? If so, what precedent does this set and what long-term consequences does this have upon future U.S. interests and global security? Is the U.S. bogged down in persistent conflicts that it cannot win but are too costly to withdraw from in terms of consequences to its security? While these seem to be questions without generally acceptable answers, major powers have withdrawn from unfinished conflicts throughout history. The purpose of this study is to explore case studies of historical withdrawals from unfinished conflicts to discover what factors of the withdrawal process make withdrawals more effective in achieving the strategic goals of the imposing power.

Primary Research Question

What lessons do selected case studies of historic withdrawals from unfinished conflicts yield at the strategic level for potential application to other military withdrawals?

Secondary Research Questions

The following secondary questions contribute to answering the primary research question:

1. What lessons do the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

2. What lessons do the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

3. What lessons do the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

Significance

This study yields significance to current and future withdrawal planners through the implications learned from historical case studies regarding withdrawals in the face of unfinished conflicts. As the U.S. timetable for withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan is at least partially tied to the perception of how these withdrawals will influence U.S. strategic goals, it is important to have a historically grounded perspective on strategies for withdrawal that most effectively advance national goals. By researching case studies of historic withdrawals, one may discover overarching lessons regarding the strategic effects of a withdrawal as well as the key determinants influencing this result. Although many sources detail counterinsurgency doctrine and many others study the political decision to withdraw, this study fills a knowledge gap regarding how to withdraw while preserving strategic goals given the political decision to withdraw. Stated another way, this study does not examine the decision to withdraw or the circumstances that would otherwise prevent the need for a withdrawal under unfinished circumstances. Instead, this study is limited to how a withdrawal may be conducted while achieving the greatest degree of national goals.

This study explores withdrawals as a type of operation—not failures that are best forgotten. The knowledge gained from this study will be useful to both political and military decision makers. Policy makers often make the decision to withdraw their military from another nation, and establish the general parameters under which the military force must withdraw. Military decision makers typically influence this process

through advice concerning the effect of various political parameters, then by conducting the military withdrawal. This study informs both political and military withdrawal planners by contributing to the body of knowledge regarding the effect withdrawal strategies have on attaining strategic objectives. Through an exploration of this relationship, decisions regarding how to withdraw from a conflict may be better informed.

Assumptions

In order to induce implications from case studies for potential applicability to other military withdrawals, this study assumes that the selected case studies do in fact have a degree of relevance to other military withdrawal operations. This is a significant assumption, underlying the reason this research is conducted. Although this assumption will not hold true in all future withdrawals, it is reasonable to assume that lessons learned from three historic case studies do have general applicability to other conflicts. Exactly how these lessons should be applied and when to apply them will be the occupation of future withdrawal planners, and is beyond the scope of this research.

The nature of the aforementioned assumption underpins the entirety of this research, and therefore drove the selection of case studies. No individual case study or small selection of case studies can promise applicable lessons for all future cases, which causes the lessons from any given three case studies to be oriented on a certain type of somewhat similar conflict. The orientation of this research is the military withdrawals facing the author as of this writing: the proposed U.S. withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan. Although lessons are sought for general applicability, cases are chosen that have potential relevance toward these two withdrawals.

Of the many potential withdrawal case studies to choose from, this study is limited to only three. The author chose the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan as one of the cases, as it holds some similarities to the current U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The occupied nation itself is the same (Afghanistan), and secondly the overall strength of the imposing nation is similar when compared with the Afghan resistance. The last major withdrawal that the U.S. conducted is also found relevant. Although Vietnam is distinct in many ways from Iraq and Afghanistan, the researcher makes the assumption that parallels remain in the internal American political process between these two conflicts which influence withdrawal strategy. The researcher chose Somalia as the third case study due to its influence on contemporary American withdrawal thought. Although the conflict in Somalia was far different from Iraq and Afghanistan, the lessons from the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia still weigh heavily on the minds of decision makers who influence how and if the U.S. will withdraw from the current conflicts. A more comprehensive explanation of the selection process for case studies is included in chapter 3. The assumption that the case studies are relevant to future withdrawals is therefore minimized through the careful selection of the case studies for potential relevance to those facing the U.S. as of this writing. One case study involves a major U.S. withdrawal from a protracted conflict, one involves a major power's withdrawal from Afghanistan, and one involves the most recent withdrawal affecting U.S. decision making.

Definition of Key Terms

Effective Withdrawal. A withdrawal that preserves the national goals of the imposing nation to the maximum extent possible.

Imposing Nation. This study defines an imposing nation as one which intervenes in the affairs of an autonomous nation through the method of deploying military forces.

Unfinished Conflict. For the purposes of this study, an unfinished conflict is one in which (1) the imposing nation chooses or is forced to leave another nation to the detriment of its national goals, and (2) open hostility toward the imposing nation still exists.

Withdrawal. For the purposes of this study, a withdrawal is defined as the removal of conventional combat troops from a foreign country. This definition will vary slightly in application for each specific case study to meet the general intent that the imposing nation has significantly divested military power in the other country.

Scope

The scope of this study is limited to three historical case studies involving the withdrawal of troops by major world powers in the face of unfinished conflicts. Although hundreds of such cases have occurred throughout history, this study focuses on only three so that a qualitative review of each withdrawal may be made at the strategic level. Furthermore, this study only includes unfinished conflicts and not successful counterinsurgency campaigns. Although the study of successful counterinsurgencies certainly yields valuable lessons for conducting such a form of warfare, the scope of this research is limited to less successful results to conflict. The purpose of such a limitation is to present lessons for withdrawal planners facing similar circumstances. Furthermore, other scholars have devoted efforts toward the effective employment of counterinsurgency principles. Although the successful application of these principles may prevent the need for withdrawals from unfinished conflicts, withdrawals remain a reality

in the current environment. Rather than avoiding this messy situation, the author instead explores this underdeveloped field of study to discover what principles may effectively advance one's own interests when withdrawals become necessary.

The scope of research is limited to historic documentation on withdrawals and will not include any previously unpublished data. However, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on withdrawal theory by focusing exclusively on the withdrawal phase at the strategic level and comparing the strategy of withdrawal in three specific cases with subsequent effects. This study does not explore the tactical or operational elements of a withdrawal. Although these are equally worthy of study, they remain outside the scope of this study to permit a focus on the relationship between the overarching strategy a nation uses to withdraw and the effects brought by that strategy.

Limitations

The narrow scope of this study is necessary to limit it, but this limitation prevents a comprehensive approach necessary to prove cause and effect between a myriad of variables on long-term strategic interests. Instead, this study may only suggest causes and effects between strategic withdrawal approaches and impact on national objectives for the future based on three historic case studies. This study is also limited by the fact that it induces implications from historic case studies that are distinct from future military withdrawals. Therefore, this study cannot prescribe formulas for future withdrawals. However, while predicting the future remains impossible, this study does discover trends regarding withdrawal strategy found in multiple historic cases.

This study is further limited to three case studies to account for limited time available while allowing for a comparison between withdrawal strategies and effects of

those strategies. Despite these limitations, this study offers useful lessons regarding strategic military withdrawals. While variables in future withdrawals will certainly deviate from historic ones, leaders face similar concerns about withdrawal that persistently influence their decisions. Understanding how historic withdrawals took place at the strategic level will illuminate routine strategic concerns and reveal connections between causes and effects that decision makers may anticipate. Although history rarely repeats itself, lessons from the past nevertheless yield pertinent lessons to guide future decision making.

Summary

Given the background of the U.S. proposal to withdraw from military involvements in Iraq and Afghanistan, this study asks how withdrawals may be conducted while preserving as much of one's strategic goals as possible. The research explores historic case studies of withdrawals to discover lessons of potential relevance to future military withdrawals. The case studies are the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia. Through studying these conflicts, this thesis contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding how a strategic withdrawal may be effectively conducted. Before this study may begin, however, one must first evaluate what literature already exists on withdrawal theory. Chapter 2 will explore this literature as a means to focus the research toward filling knowledge gaps that contribute to effective future withdrawals. Chapter 3 then explores the strengths and weaknesses of the case study methodology to fill these gaps. Chapter 4 explores the three case studies within the parameters established in the previous chapters,

then chapter 5 concludes and makes recommendations for future withdrawal planners to consider.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> Strategic leaders . . . should . . . seek to understand and apply lessons provided by historic examples of successful and failed withdrawal operations.
>
> — Olson, Withdrawal from Empire

This literature review explores the lessons that have been drawn by other scholars regarding the art of withdrawal and subsequent strategic impacts. This review focuses on the state of scholarly theory regarding withdrawals in general, and then on how the literature regarding the specific case studies was chosen out of all available literature. The exploration of the withdrawals from Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Somalia is reserved for chapter 4. Chapter 2 establishes the current state of theory on withdrawals so that parameters from which to explore the specific case studies of this thesis may be created. The purpose of this chapter is to establish a basis of understanding on what already exists so that the remaining chapters may have a solid grounding for expanding the current state of literature on withdrawal theory. This literature review begins by discussing the three predominant theories on withdrawal: all withdrawals are inevitable, early withdrawals damage national goals, and withdrawals must appear legitimate. The last section then discusses how the literature for each case study was selected for further exploration in chapter 4 to answer the primary and secondary research questions.

The Prevailing Theory: All Withdrawals are Inevitable

The prevailing theory among contemporary scholars on withdrawals is that all withdrawals are inevitable. After all, rarely would a nation ever deploy troops with the intent of maintaining the effort indefinitely unless its intent was conquest and occupation.

Rather, goals and objectives of a military action are established with the purpose of achieving these and redeploying. The U.S. Army Operations Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, supports this theory by stating that termination is a part of the planning cycle of a military operation (Department of the Army 2008, 3-4). However, the circumstances under which withdrawals occur vary widely. In a monograph for the School for Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Brian Olson explained this theory through case studies of Britain's withdrawal from Egypt, Aden, and Kenya. He purported that all powerful nations eventually withdraw from the embroilment of affairs in other nations with the eventual goal to "empower the sovereign nation in self-governance" (Olson 2008, 1). He analyzed both the reasons and methods of withdrawal in each case study, and found the following trends as critical factors affecting the strategic impact of a withdrawal: territorial self-governance, internal and regional stability, state of rebuilding a viable government, and economic impact of withdrawal on the withdrawing power.

Although Olson agreed with the theory that withdrawals are inevitable, he also found that certain conditions within the withdrawal process serve to advance the strategic goals of the imposing nation more than others. These conditions include the following: (1) leaving a properly trained government, security force, and economic capability, (2) withdrawing on friendly terms to maintain alliances, and (3) continuing economic interaction with the state post-withdrawal. However, Olson also warned about seeking a perfect solution prior to withdrawal. Although the capability of self-governance was the primary criterion for withdrawal, he argued that "the exact type of government is less important than its ability to effectively administer" (Olson 2008, 59). One of the

disturbing warnings given by Olson in his study is the danger of announcing a calendar timeline for a withdrawal in advance, because "it empowers anti-government parties and forces and gives them time to plan or fight for power to fill the vacuum" (Olson 2008, 60).

In an article analyzing the British withdrawal from the American colonies, Stanley Weintraub recognized the often repeated mistake of not having an exit strategy. He argued, "The British had no exit strategy other than victory," which caused the military action in America to continue far beyond what British national interests called for (Weintraub 2009, 36). In this article, Weintraub recognized the necessity of a withdrawal strategy whether victory is achieved or not. Concerning strategic withdrawals, he found that the best solution is to recognize the "first rule of holes: when you realize you're in one, stop digging" (Weintraub 2009, 37). He qualified this general rule by stating that the strategic cost (in terms of blood and treasure) of involvement in the American colonies had far exceeded the potential benefit and therefore withdrawal was the logical outcome.

Anthony Arnove (2006) likewise argued that withdrawals are necessary in his book, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*. He proposed that all withdrawals are eventually necessary as they serve the interests of imposing nations to preserve resources. He applied this thought directly to the U.S. in Iraq, arguing that the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq is the prime cause of resistance. Consequently, U.S. national interests are being hurt due to the unnecessary drain on financial and military resources. He further claimed that the proposed advancement of U.S. strategic goals is not working as revealed by the failure of U.S. troops to prevent Iraqi internal fighting, prevent terrorism, or secure the

Iraqi population. Although he wrote this at the peak of the violence in Iraq prior to the surge in 2007, his theory that the amount of resources a nation spends must be equal to or less than the benefit it receives from that expenditure remains. Therefore, withdrawals may be necessary on a strategic level simply because a nation is spending more than it will benefit from the involvement.

In "The Precedents for Withdrawal" in *Foreign Affairs*, Romberg Bennett (2009) adamantly agreed that withdrawals have proven to advance strategic interests throughout history. Bennett used case studies of the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in the 1970s, Lebanon in the 1980s, and Somalia in the 1990s to make his argument. He concluded that despite highly debated decisions at the time of withdrawal, withdrawals were proven the right decisions through the lens of history. Bennett claimed that "abandonment damaged Washington's credibility at first, but it was the best way to protect U.S. interests in the long run" (Bennett 2009, 2). He justified this by arguing that strategic fears of withdrawal in his case studies did not come to fruition: the dominoes did not fall after the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam, the Soviet Union did not occupy Lebanon after the U.S. withdrew, and the U.S. has not yet suffered largely from the failed state of Somalia. Bennett concluded that "the costs of withdrawal were less than those of staying and lower than what had been feared" (Bennett 2009, 2). He also observed that withdrawals did not bring peace and did indeed hinder U.S. credibility abroad. Bennett admitted that Islamic fundamentalists have used these withdrawals to solicit support for their cause. However, the overall effect on the U.S. national interest remained positive given the cost of continuing to keep troops in these conflicts and that peace was eventually established regardless in Vietnam and Lebanon.

In his Master of Military Art and Sciences thesis, Khalid Khan (1990) evaluated the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. He argued that the Soviets were wise to withdraw from Afghanistan because their cost of continued involvement exceeded their potential benefit. The direct costs of continuing their engagement in Afghanistan proved too vast, necessitating a less direct approach to influencing Afghanistan. Khan's thesis helps to validate the use of withdrawal as part of an overarching strategy. Because direct engagement with troops is so costly, alternative approaches may further the national goals of the larger country more effectively—justifying a withdrawal.

Splitting the difference between theories on withdrawal, Andrew Terrill and Conrad Crane (2005) wrote a monograph for the Strategic Studies Institute that examined the variables required for a successful withdrawal. They argued that acceptable solutions have historically been required in U.S. actions abroad, as optimal solutions come at too high a price. The authors proposed that the two central variables of a successful disengagement are a viable central government and a capable security force. Using a case study of the U.S. in Iraq, they defined the costs to U.S. interests as a declining domestic population supporting the war, the impact the war is having on the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard, and the international skepticism regarding the true interests of the U.S. in that oil-rich region. However, the authors also argued against too hasty a withdrawal that fails to achieve minimally acceptable strategic aims. Minimum criteria for a withdrawal include establishing governance and a security force due to the potentially negative impact their absence could have on U.S. strategic interests post-withdrawal.

Bruce Clarke introduced rationality to the science of conflict termination in his book, *Conflict Termination: A Rational Model.* He argued that although disputes must be eventually ended, there are six primary methods of how to end them: a cease-fire, a peace treaty, a joint political agreement, one side declaring victory, capitulation, and a withdrawal (B. Clarke 1992, 9-10). He argued that the U.S. unsuccessfully attempted to declare victory in Vietnam when in fact the U.S. was simply using this declaration to assuage political pressures associated with the withdrawal. In a similarly logic-based analysis of military withdrawal, Joseph Engelbrecht wrote *War Termination: Why Does a State Decide to Stop Fighting?* He established four theories that logically end a conflict: one side definitively wins the engagement, a change of political leadership, a new element in the cost-benefit ratio, and that a political leader begins to see a war as the primary problem (Engelbrecht 1992, 29-38). Although Bruce Clarke presented a convincing argument from a logical perspective, he failed to account for the irrational factors that may influence the political decision to withdraw. In political decision making during tumultuous times, national will, national pride, and national fear may play a larger role than the sheer logic Clarke espouses.

The Competing Theory: Early Withdrawals Damage Strategic Goals

Even Olson, who fully supported the theory of withdrawing as a universal imperative, admitted the fear imposing powers have toward withdrawing. He conceded that the loss of Egypt was a "devastating blow to Britain's strategic capabilities and her pride" (Olson 2008, 55). He warned that "[i]f an occupying force or nation cannot

effectively govern the affairs or people of a nation it is occupying, they should set it up for success prior to independence" (Olson 2008, 55).

In *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, William Maley and Amin Saikal (1989) detailed the great costs of withdrawal through a case study of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. They found that the withdrawal discredited the international framework for large nations to interfere in another state, destabilized the region, and negatively impacted politics within the Soviet Union. Maley and Saikal examined the technique with which the Soviets withdrew, concluding that it was an approach of compromise and not victory. Auspiciously, the authors stated in 1989 that "it is important to realize that Soviet withdrawal should not be confused with the attainment of real peace and justice in Afghanistan, that the war there is far from over, and that the responsibilities of those governments . . . have certainly not ended" (Maley and Saikal 1989, 142).

Lester Grau (2007) further analyzed the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in *Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. In direct contrast to Maley and Saikal, Grau claimed that the Soviets did leave Afghanistan with a coordinated diplomatic, economic, and military plan that turned authority over to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. So strong was this turnover, he argued, that the Afghan government survived the Soviet collapse of 1991. However, this Afghan government fell in April of 1992 due to the loss of Soviet support combined with an increased mujahedeen and Pakistani offensive. In sum, Grau argued that despite a well-coordinated withdrawal, the withdrawal did not secure long-term goals due to a lack of ability to follow through over time.

In his article “Reputation and U.S. Withdrawal from Iraq,” Hakan Tunc (2008) argued against withdrawal in the case of the U.S. in Iraq. His argument rested on the need to demonstrate America’s resolve. He claimed that a quick withdrawal would be a major blow to U.S. credibility and embolden radical Islam. Citing examples from Vietnam, Tunc argued that hegemonic withdrawals before conditions of success are met serve to feed future enemies the requisite resolve to fight in the future.

The Other Theory: Withdrawals Must Appear Legitimate

While the previous two groups of theorists concerned themselves on if a withdrawal should or should not be conducted, this group of theorists argued that withdrawals may occur if they present the appearance of legitimacy to the parties involved as well as the international community. In a RAND publication titled *How Insurgencies End*, Ben Connable and Martin Libicki (2010) took on a both quantitative and qualitative journey examining how 89 insurgencies have ended. They found 28 cases in which insurgencies were defeated, which allowed for a successful withdrawal by the imposing nation. They also found 26 cases in which the imposing nation or local government was outright defeated or withdrew before the insurgency was defeated. In the remaining 35 cases, the results were either inconclusive or pending a conclusion to hostilities. The authors discovered that insurgencies typically last about ten years before being defeated. However, inconsistent support by either the insurgents’ supporters or the government forces generally led to that side’s defeat. Furthermore, the government’s chance of defeating an insurgency increased over time. The authors also discovered that governments defeat themselves more often than an insurgency defeats them. They found

that governments—particularly democratic governments—have great internal difficulty sustaining their operations over the requisite timeline to defeat the insurgents, which is one of the primary criterion for winning. When democratic governments were able to maintain their counterinsurgency effort over several election cycles, they were far more likely to succeed. Those who successfully defeated insurgencies were aggressive, fully resourced, and population-centric. They found no shortcuts to effective withdrawals, but rather that a consistent and protracted campaign is required for governmental success (Connable and Libicki 2010, xi-xviii, 151-156).

In a 2003 study for the U.S. Army War College, Donald Clarke examined an exit strategy for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Multinational Forces and Observers in the Sinai. He purported that a withdrawal may be perceived by host countries and the international community as a lack of commitment, or could spawn unrest in the region. Another concern Donald Clarke raised is that a U.S. withdrawal would cause other allies to withdraw, leaving a power vacuum in the area. His largest concern, however, was the lack of predictability concerning what would happen after a withdrawal. He therefore suggested that a treaty would help legitimize the withdrawal and minimize negative repercussions to support overall U.S. national goals. He also presented the option of sharing the burden of deployed forces more evenly across Allied nations if the deployment was determined favorable in the eyes of the international community (D. Clarke 2003, 10).

Juorg Vollmer (2002) applied a variant of Donald Clarke's theory in his School for Advanced Military Studies monograph, "NATO and the Balkans: Is there a Chance for a Successful Exit Strategy?" Vollmer linked the withdrawal of NATO troops from

Bosnia and Herzegovina to a political decision. He claimed that the withdrawal criteria are "a stable region aimed at economic integration and security cooperation with sovereign states who guarantee sovereign political decisions of democratically elected governments" (Vollmer 2002, i). However, like Olson (2008), he proposed the dangerous idea of incrementally withdrawing by reducing troops to minimum necessary levels. Although this may work in areas with relatively low threats, the implications for nations such as Iraq and Afghanistan where highly potent threats have emerged is dangerous. He also denied military responsibility in creating the conditions Olson required for withdrawal, stating that "the centers of gravity, the governments of the successor states, are purely political. To get them to work or function is not the mission of military forces" (Vollmer 2002, 61).

In his book, *Withdrawal from Empire: A Military View*, William Jackson (1986) detailed the military campaigns conducted in Britain's orderly withdrawal from its empire after World War II. Although primarily documenting Britain's battles that precipitated withdrawals, Jackson found many factors necessitating withdrawals. He argued that imperial overextension mandated withdrawal despite conditions in host countries that made withdrawal unfavorable. Therefore, many of Olson's criteria for successful withdrawals were not met and Britain was unable to maintain its strategic interests in many countries it withdrew from. In some cases (such as Egypt in 1956), British forces had to fight their way out of the country. However, he concluded by cautioning that involvement in smaller nations remains necessary to protect foreign interests abroad.

Rajeev Bhargava evaluated the British withdrawal from India in 1947 in an article for *Dissent*, proposing that the British had two primary considerations: (1) that it must secure its strategic interests during the withdrawal process, and (2) it must exit under its own terms—or at least appear to (Bhargava 2009, 40). Bhargava argued that Britain felt obligated to withdraw from India in the wake of World War II, yet was highly concerned with saving face by withdrawing under a mantle of legitimacy. Therefore, Britain used methods such as transferring power to the Indian government in an attempt to ensure its withdrawal was peaceful and viewed as beneficial. However, when communal violence erupted upon news of withdrawal, the British were unable to achieve their criteria and were forced to withdraw under damaging conditions (Bhargava 2009, 43). In a separate article for *Dissent*, Todd Shepard analyzed the French withdrawal from Algeria with similar results. The French in Algeria, like the British in India, had decided that withdrawal was in their best strategic interests but only if they could withdraw in a manner which protected their image. The French therefore attempted to withdraw from a position of power by proposing that it was their idea to liberate Algeria and not the National Liberation Front that was forcing them out. However, in the wake of a violent withdrawal, such criteria were not met and the French were unable to secure their strategic long-term goals in Algeria as anti-French forces filled the subsequent power vacuum (Shepard 2009, 49).

Fred Smoler argued in an article for *Dissent* that the U.S. has never been able to withdraw from Korea—despite its original intent to do so—because it has never met the criteria for a successful withdrawal. He argued that military withdrawals are decisions made by politicians. He therefore supposed that a decision to withdraw should meet a

strategic goal, or at least be strategically less costly than the next best alternative (Smoler 2009, 47).

Selecting Literature for Case Studies

A plethora of literature exists on the topics of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, and the U.S. involvement in Somalia. To narrow the potential sources down to something pertinent to this research, the literature was limited to only those discussing the conflicts at the strategic level. As a further limitation on the literature explored, only those discussing the withdrawal phase of the conflict were evaluated. With this narrow segment of the literature to focus on, each source was then screened for potential applicability to this research.

The researcher found sufficient literature on the strategic withdrawal strategy that the U.S. employed in Vietnam. Before the U.S. had even fully withdrawn, William Corson wrote *Consequences of Failure* that sheds light on the strategic fears associated with the impending withdrawal (Corson 1974). Alan Dawson then focused on the short-term consequences of the withdrawal in his book on the fall of Vietnam in his book, *55 Days: The Fall of South Vietnam* (Dawson 1977). In 1998, Jeffrey Clark published a book that details the final years of the U.S. in Vietnam as the withdrawal was beginning in *Advice and Support: The Final Years, 1965-1973* (J. Clarke 1998). A general overview of the Vietnam War is gained through Ronald Frankum and Stephen Maxner's *The Vietnam War for Dummies* (Frankum and Maxner 2003). Mark Lawrence's detailed account of the entire Vietnam War to include the withdrawal phase was also useful, *The Vietnam War* (Lawrence 2008). Several scholarly articles also shed light on the Vietnam withdrawal and contemporary interpretations of it, including Frances FitzGerald's

"Vietnam" in the journal *Dissent* and Tim Kane and David Gentilli's "Is Iraq Another Vietnam" in *Backgrounder* (FitzGerald 2009; Kane and Gentilli 2006). Online sources were also useful in providing specific details of the withdrawal and a historical timeline, including PBS's "Vietnam Online," Kolko's "The End of the Vietnam War, 20 Years Ago" on counterpunch.org, and BBC's article "1975: Vietnam's President Thieu Resigns" (BBC 2010; Kolko 2005; PBS 2005).

The researcher also found sufficient literature on the strategic withdrawal strategy that the Soviet Union used in Afghanistan. One of the most useful sources was an English translation of a documentary published by the Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War* (Russian General Staff 2002). Just after the Soviet collapse, Oleg Sarin and Lev Dvoretsky published a critical work of the strategic effect the withdrawal had in *The Afghan Syndrome: The Soviet Union's Vietnam* (Sarin and Dvoretsky 1993). Rausl Rais' *War Without Winners: Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition After the Cold War* also shed light on the difficulties the Soviet Union had in withdrawing from Afghanistan and the strategic impact that made on the Soviet Union (Rais 2004). For a more contemporary viewpoint on the war, Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman's *A Brief History of Afghanistan* described both the withdrawal methodology and results of those methods (Wahab and Youngerman 2007). Lastly, the researcher used BBC as a source for general facts and a timeline of events (BBC 2009).

The researcher also found ample sources to document the strategic withdrawal strategy that the U.S. used in Somalia. Several documentaries of the U.S. Army in Somalia proved highly useful, particularly Walter Poole's book *The Effort to Save Somalia* for the Joint History Office (Poole 2005). Richard Stewart also documented the

U.S. Army in Somalia, yet only focused on the early phases of withdrawal in *The United States Army in Somalia: 1992-1994* (Stewart 1994). Contemporary sources also provided valuable insight on the consequences of withdrawal, including Dennis Mroczkowski's *Restoring Hope: In Somalia with the Unified Task Force, 1992-1993* (Mroczkowski 2005). Many articles provided various perspectives on how the strategy for withdrawing impacted the U.S., including Robert Press' article "UN and US Prepare for Chaotic Ending to Somalia Venture" in *Christian Science Monitor* (Press 1995). Ilene Prusher detailed the effects that the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia had in "Post-US, Somalia Finds Many Cash in on Chaos" for *Christian Science Monitor* (Prusher 1997). Bronwyn Bruton wrote from a perspective of long-term impacts with "In the Quicksands of Somalia" for *Foreign Affairs* (Bruton 2009). Lastly, the researcher used news articles such as PBS's "Ambush in Mogadishu" and BBC's "Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened" to assist in establishing facts and timelines (BBC 2008; PBS 1998).

Summary and Conclusion

This literature review discovered three primary schools of thought surrounding withdrawals: (1) that all withdrawals are inevitable, (2) that withdrawals damage national goals, and (3) that withdrawals must appear legitimate. From this review, the researcher discovered that a solid theoretical basis already exists on the strategic decision to withdraw military forces from a foreign involvement. This review revealed a mature state of academic literature surrounding the consequences of a withdrawal on the national goals of a nation, particularly a great power nation. However, a significant gap in the literature remains concerning how a withdrawal should be conducted given the political decision to withdraw. Current schools of thought focus predominately on if a withdrawal

should be conducted, not how a withdrawal should be conducted. The literature surrounding each case study sufficiently documented the withdrawals at the strategic level, yet failed to link the strategy of the withdrawal with the overall effect on the national goals of the nations involved. Documentaries of each withdrawal are plentiful, yet theories on what elements of the withdrawal strategies caused what effects are lacking. While some scholars elaborated upon the withdrawal and others presented facts regarding the consequences, a gap remains in theorizing how the strategic withdrawal strategy impacts the national goals of the nations involved. This study picks up where previous scholars have ended by exploring how the strategy employed in a withdrawal may influence the strategic objectives of the withdrawing nation.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Sufficient research exists on the general theory of withdrawal (reviewed in chapter 2), and a large volume of literature exists that chronicles the conflicts in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Sufficient documentation also exists on the withdrawal of forces from each of these conflicts. However, the literature review found a gap regarding the relationship between general withdrawal theory and the overall strategy for withdrawing for inferential cause and effect relationships. The research methodology of this study therefore uses existent historical case study data, yet approaches these sources with a focus on the strategy of withdrawal to discover its impact.

The methodology of this thesis was derived from the gaps existing in the literature explored in chapter 2. New data collection is not required to describe the actual conflicts, but research is needed to propose theoretical inferences between the strategy employed and the results attained. This approach suggests that it is not simply the decision to remain or withdraw that determines effect on national objectives, but that the actual strategy of withdrawal may also have significant consequences on the national goals of the nations involved. Therefore, a study of how nations have withdrawn from foreign military involvements may yield lessons for achieving strategic goals throughout the withdrawal process. Although this study is limited to merely three case studies, further studies using different cases (successful and unsuccessful) may be used to confirm or deny these conclusions and to determine the conditions required to effectively apply them. This chapter describes the research methodology chosen to answer the research

questions, addresses how the author chose the three case studies to answer these questions, then addresses the measures taken to ensure the research was valid, reliable, and significant.

Methodology

The research driving this thesis was explored in a qualitative manner with the intent of capturing the overall impact that the withdrawal had on the withdrawing nation. The desire of the researcher was to qualitatively suggest that certain strategies of withdrawal yielded positive or negative effects for the imposing nation as a trend between selected case studies. Timothy McKeown validates the utility of case studies under such conditions in his article "Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview." He stated that "it is an error to attempt to squeeze all empirical practice in the social sciences into a particular statistical mold" (McKewn 1999, 161-162). Although he finds that causality (or even inferential relationships) may be difficult to establish using historical case studies due to the variety of variables impacting the independent variable and the implausibility of such circumstances repeating, this remains a valid research approach for inferential conclusions.

Circumstances vary drastically between cases. The inferred relationship between withdrawal strategy and effect is certain to depend somewhat on these circumstances. Instead of measuring exact circumstances, this study focuses on general trends between the withdrawal strategy and the effect. The purpose of this approach is to determine how strategies of withdrawal impact the imposing nation's objectives. Withdrawal strategies are determined to have generally negative or positive effects in each case study, and

trends across the three case studies are used to suggest lessons to consider for future application.

The methodology used in this study is sufficient to indicate repeatable trends, although it cannot prescribe formulas guaranteed to work in varying conditions. John Gerring described case studies as useful to indicate such trends through his definition of a case study as one of "a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units" (Gerring 2004, 341). Gerring argued that the case study is best suited when "the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena" (Gerring 2004, 341). He described case studies as most often suggesting inferential relationships, not establishing predictive causality. However, this admission does not dismiss the scientific nature of the case study approach. He categorized case studies as including a population, sample, unit, case, variables, and observation. In this case of this study, lessons of general applicability are oriented toward the population of all military withdrawals. The samples included are the withdrawal operations in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Within each case study, the primary categories (units) studied in chapter 4 include the withdrawal technique and withdrawal strategic impact. The discrete point in time (cases) explored in each sample is the withdrawal phase of the operation, and observations are made from these cases in the form of lessons learned. Gerring defended this construct in developing case studies using what he calls a qualitative "comparative-historical" approach (Gerring 2004, 343).

One of the primary advantages in using the case study approach to explore withdrawals is that it allows for greater breadth. Although an intensive exploration of a single study would provide the greatest depth, it would also prevent a comparative

analysis of how the withdrawal strategy impacted the overall success of a withdrawal operation. Gerring contended that “arguments that strive for great breadth and boundedness are in greater need of cross-unit cases” (Gerring 2004, 347). He further claimed that “case studies enjoy a natural advantage in research of an exploratory nature” (Gerring 2004, 349).

The nature of protracted international interventions is extremely complex. The number of factors influencing the eventual withdrawal of an imposing nation cannot be foreseen. Therefore, this thesis does not attempt to establish predictive formulas for a successful withdrawal at the tactical, operational, or strategic level. Despite this, there is value in studying military operations at the strategic level. Although conditions differ, every military operation does have internal elements that repeatedly lead to success or failure. This study therefore explores the withdrawal strategy used in each case study to discover commonalities in strategies used and results achieved.

The qualitative approach used for research was historical case study analysis. This methodology was used due to the availability of historic case studies as well as practical restraints regarding using experimental methods in conflicts. This study aimed to understand the strategic consequences that various withdrawal strategies had, and therefore avoided details regarding the tactical and operational considerations of a withdrawal (unless they had a direct strategic impact). Strategic trends were explored to determine if there are general principles of withdrawal strategy that produce positive or negative results as displayed over multiple case studies.

This thesis used the case study methodology as defined by the University of Wisconsin-Extension’s program development and evaluation guide. Ellen Taylor-Powell

and Sara Steele defined the case study approach as “an in-depth examination of a particular case—a program, group of participants, single individual, site, or location. Case studies rely on multiple sources of information and methods to provide as complete a picture as possible” (Taylor-Powell and Steele 1996, 4). To adhere to these methodological guidelines regarding depth of evaluation, the researcher limited the scope of study to only the strategic echelon of each case study.

Multiple sources were sought for each case study to ensure that an accurate picture was painted that represented the withdrawals from multiple points of view. Sources were purposely drawn from different time periods. Some sources were taken from the time period when the conflict was ending, some sources from a few years after, and some sources from current literature to capture a historic perspective on the true national costs incurred as a result of the withdrawal. Sources from each time period were necessary to ensure the impact of the withdrawal strategy was captured from various historical perspectives—short, mid, and long-term. For example, the cost of withdrawal may seem far higher when it is being conducted than after both nations have healed from the conflict. Sources from many types of literature were also used, including primary sources, documentaries, and theoretical articles written in scholarly journals.

Choosing the Three Case Studies

The three case studies chosen to answer the primary question were the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia. The author selected each case for its potential relevance to future withdrawals, particularly the U.S. withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan. As Douglas Dion points out in his article, “Evidence and Inference in the Comparative Case

Study," selection bias is certain to weigh into the case study methodology. To combat this bias, he argued that "in selecting cases researchers testing necessary conditions need to be sensitive to the problem of selecting on the independent variable" (Dion 1998, 133). In other words, a researcher must guard against selecting only cases with the same independent variable.

Given the aforementioned warnings in case study selection, the author selected three distinct case studies that had varying levels of effect on the withdrawing nation. The U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam had a large impact on U.S. foreign policy, and is pertinent as the last major withdrawal operation conducted by the United States. Vietnam exists as perhaps the most common frame of reference for U.S. politicians and scholars in contemporary literature concerning major withdrawals. The author chose the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan as a case study due to this case being the last military withdrawal from Afghanistan. The distinct effect this had on the Soviet Union will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 4.

Although the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia seems like an aberrant case in this study, it is more relevant than other larger withdrawals because it has had a greater effect on contemporary U.S. decision making regarding withdrawal strategy. The scope of U.S. involvement in Somalia was far smaller than contemporary U.S. military involvements, yet the abrupt withdrawal method is indicative of fears within the contemporary American political culture that considers military intervention undesirable and potentially self-defeating. Furthermore, the withdrawal strategy used in Somalia has been suggested in scholarly literature as applicable to current U.S. decision makers by those who view involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan as outside U.S. interests. The author chose to

include the Somalia case study due to its current influence on U.S. policy as well as to provide insight into the ramifications of applying a fast withdrawal approach.

Countless other case studies exist for others to explore and induce general lessons from. Each of the case studies selected for this study end with negative consequences for the imposing nation. Although it is fruitful to also study cases of successful withdrawals, the author chose three less successful cases to focus the study upon how unsuccessful international involvements may become less unsuccessful—even when victory is out of reach.

Criteria

It is important that the research conducted in chapter 4 be valid, reliable, and significant. To ensure validity in this research, the logic and underlying assumptions are clearly stated for the reader to evaluate. This is particularly important when attempting to draw lessons for future application as circumstances surrounding withdrawals will vary widely between types of conflict and nations involved. The validity of this research is only guaranteed in the case studies explored, and the validity of these trends for future cases is dependent upon the similarity of circumstances.

The primary concern surrounding reliability in this research is that circumstances change between test cases, making each case unrepeatable. Therefore, this study can only ensure reliability within each case study used and not elsewhere except through an interpretation of how those results yield transferable lessons of significance. In other words, the lessons from each case study cannot be reliably used by future military withdrawal planners without independent analysis to determine if conditions are similar enough to merit a lesson being transferable. Future projections are beyond the scope of

this research, and reliability is therefore limited to suggestive trends and not prescriptive methodologies. To ensure reliability within this scope, sources were carefully documented so that future researchers might retrace logical steps for application in differing environments.

Due to the time and space restraints of the research in this study, it is critical that only the portions of each case study that were significant in answering the research questions are presented. Therefore, this study significantly limited the general background of each conflict as well as the tactical and operational elements of the withdrawal to focus solely on the strategic withdrawal strategy. Significance is achieved through carefully selecting a narrow segment of each conflict, then evaluating these segments across three distinct studies to discover trends. Therefore, lessons drawn from this study only yield significance in the specific area of strategic withdrawal strategy.

Conclusion

The literature review established that sufficient literature exists from which to extrapolate general lessons on strategic withdrawal strategy using a qualitative historic case study approach. Chapter 3 described the historical case study methodology in greater detail, and discovered that value may be added to the existent literature by focusing on the narrow segment that links the strategic withdrawal strategy with strategic effect. This chapter then described why the three case studies of the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia were chosen as case studies for chapter 4. Finally, chapter 3 addressed measures the researcher took to ensure that the methodological approach was valid, reliable, and produced

significant results. Chapter 4 next applies the methodological approach described in this chapter to the three selected case studies.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Chapter 2 established the state of literature on withdrawal theory and found that a gap exists in determining how withdrawal strategies impact withdrawing nations. Chapter 3 then revealed that the case study research approach could contribute to filling this gap in literature. Chapter 4 now explores three case studies to determine how the withdrawal strategy influenced the withdrawing nation. The three case studies analyzed are the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia. These cases are studied in chapter 4 independently, without direct application to other withdrawal operations. The trends and the application of these trends will instead be presented in chapter 5. Although an abundance of literature exists regarding each case study, the research presented in chapter 4 is limited to the literature which helps to answer each secondary research question. The secondary research questions are:

1. What lessons do the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

2. What lessons do the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

3. What lessons do the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

By answering each of these secondary research questions in chapter 4, the primary research question may then be answered in chapter 5. The primary research question is: what lessons do selected case studies of historic withdrawals from unfinished

conflicts yield at the strategic level for potential application to other military withdrawals? Each case study is approached in chapter 4 using the same format: the background of the conflict, the strategic (political/military) withdrawal strategy, the withdrawal strategic impact, and the lessons learned. The basic background of the conflict is presented to establish the strategic goals and interests that the intervening nation had in getting involved and the conditions which drove the imposing nation to withdraw. After this brief background, the strategy of withdrawal is studied in greater detail at the strategic level. Next, the strategic impact that the withdrawal strategy had on both sides is explored. Major considerations in this section are a description of who filled the power vacuum in the host country, how this affected the imposing nation, and the final condition of the host nation. Lastly, the lessons learned from each withdrawal are presented.

The United States Withdrawal from Vietnam

Basic Background of the Conflict

In an era when the Soviet Union and the United States battled for global dominance, Vietnam became a hotly contested arena. The North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong fought the armies of South Vietnam and the United States over which form of government would take control. To prevent a communist takeover of South Vietnam, the U.S. deployed advisors in the 1950s and combat forces in the 1960s and 1970s. The strategic interest of the U.S. was not so much the battleground of Vietnam itself, but rather the global implications of the spread of communism by force. The limited goal for which the U.S. originally committed troops was assisting South Vietnam in defeating the

insurgency represented by a guerrilla force, the National Liberation Front (NLF) (FitzGerald 2009, 53). See figure 1 for a map of Vietnam.

Figure 1. Map of Vietnam
Source: Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook, Vietnam,* https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html (accessed 15 May 2010).

After the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam peaked at 537,377 in 1968, and the nature of the conflict changed with the large-scale involvement of the North Vietnamese military, the U.S. began a policy of Vietnamization (Kane and Gentilli 2006, 2). This policy prescribed that South Vietnamese forces would become increasingly self-reliant for their security and that U.S. forces would withdraw. Throughout the course of sharp debates both internationally and within the U.S. government, the U.S. withdrew its military forces from Vietnam. The North Vietnamese army subsequently defeated South

Vietnamese forces and captured Saigon in April of 1975, and the North Vietnamese military forcibly reunited the South with the North.

Withdrawal Strategy

From 1973 to 1975, the U.S. withdrew its military forces from Vietnam under agreed upon peace accords with both South and North Vietnam. President Nixon indicated that if North Vietnam violated the accord, U.S. troops would once again become involved in direct combat (Lawrence 2008, 159). As the U.S. withdrew, it increased its aid to the government of South Vietnam as an attempt to make the policy of Vietnamization work. However, large amounts of aid were not sustainable to an American public who paid a large price in terms of dollars, service members, and national attention the previous decade. With troops no longer deployed, Vietnam became a lesser priority to the American people and aid dropped.

The process of withdrawal from Vietnam was a belabored and highly political process for the United States. Lengthy negotiations took place between the U.S., South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and others who had an interest in the conflict. President Johnson initiated peace talks with Hanoi on 31 March 1968 (FitzGerald 2009, 53). Despite these initial efforts, however, the process of withdrawal was not simple. President Nixon, not wanting to be the first American president to lose a war, attempted to ensure that a U.S. withdrawal would not cause the anticommunist government in Saigon to fall (FitzGerald 2009, 53). Admitting that a military victory was no longer a feasible option, President Nixon maintained troops in Vietnam simply to buy time for a political solution (FitzGerald 2009, 53).

Instead of an immediate withdrawal, President Nixon attempted a strategy of withdrawing while preserving America's honor. As the U.S. withdrew its forces and changed its focus to this new strategy, it focused on financial aid and advisory missions. President Nixon's plan included supporting South Vietnam to raise a million man military and acquire the fourth largest air force in the world (FitzGerald 2009, 53). To combat the losses of the South Vietnamese, the U.S. increased aid to reinforce its policy of Vietnamization without sending more U.S. troops. As the U.S. became desperate to withdraw under the auspices of legitimacy, it finally disregarded Cambodia's neutrality and began bombing North Vietnamese infiltration routes through an air war (Frankum and Maxner 2003, 135).

The U.S. attempted to make the policy of Vietnamization work. Despite domestic support at record lows, the U.S. planned massive aid programs to assist the South Vietnamese as U.S. troops withdrew. Aid programs included economic stimulus incentives and programs to improve the quality of life within South Vietnam (J. Clarke 1998, 352). The U.S. focused specifically on the leadership of the military of South Vietnam, attempting to ensure competent leaders were in place that could maintain resistance to the North and potentially win in battle. The policy of Vietnamization came close to working. By 1971, most of the NLF had been destroyed and the South Vietnamese government in Saigon had control over most of its population (FitzGerald 2009, 54).

The policy of Vietnamization led to the commitment of U.S. troops in South Vietnam for an additional five years after it was begun. In 1973, the multi-party Paris Peace Accords were conducted to secure a peace with honor. The North Vietnamese

agreed to a bilateral cease fire and to release prisoners, and the U.S. agreed to the cease fire and not to interfere with the domestic policy of South Vietnam. Even South Vietnam agreed to these accords, reinforcing its right to self determination (Frankum and Maxner 2003, 140). However, these promises proved short lived. The North Vietnamese quickly broke their pledge with new offensives, knowing that the U.S. did not have the political will to resume the war after it had begun withdrawing troops (Frankum and Maxner 2003, 148). The political reality was that U.S. domestic support was rapidly waning for the War, and it became obvious that the commitment of U.S. troops to Vietnam would not last (J. Clarke 1998).

The U.S. intended to leave a residual military force as the majority of combat troops departed to act as a quick reaction force for the South Vietnamese Army. However, the lack of U.S. domestic support for troops in Vietnam demanded that even those residual forces return home (J. Clarke 1998). By the end of 1974, North Vietnamese forces were once again on the attack and the U.S. did not have the national will to either redeploy its forces or aid the South Vietnamese with enough resources to turn the tide. On 23 April 1975, President Ford declared an end to the Vietnam War for the U.S. (PBS 2005). Statistically, it seemed that the U.S. had fulfilled its end of the Vietnamization policy. The South Vietnamese Army appeared prepared for victory: it had three times more artillery than the North, twice as many tanks and armored vehicles, 1,400 aircraft, and 200 percent more combat service members (Kolko 2005). Furthermore, the U.S. had achieved its original goal for entering Vietnam: the NLF was defeated. However, the achievement of this original objective no longer represented victory. By the early 1970s, it was not the NLF that posed the primary threat to South

Vietnamese and U.S. forces. The North Vietnamese had joined the conflict in force, supporting and then overtaking the NLF efforts (FitzGerald 2009, 53). Statistics were not enough to sustain the South Vietnamese Army and Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese on 30 April 1975.

The fall of Saigon marked the final South Vietnamese and U.S. defeat of the Vietnam War in a highly visible fashion. Saigon fell dramatically to North Vietnamese tanks as the U.S. Embassy evacuated its personnel by helicopter and U.S. sympathizers were executed (Dawson 1977). The acting South Vietnamese President Minh surrendered and ordered all South Vietnamese troops to cease resistance.

Withdrawal Strategic Impact

When the U.S. forces departed Vietnam, Americans could temporarily be comforted by the logic of the Vietnamization policy. However, such comfort soon melted as South Vietnamese allies were brutally killed when left without American forces to defend them. The withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Vietnam caused increased unemployment in South Vietnam, increased inflation, and unprecedented levels of corruption (FitzGerald 2009, 56). Two hundred thousand South Vietnamese soldiers deserted in 1974 while, in America, President Nixon was resigning and Congress was cutting aid packages to Vietnam (FitzGerald 2009, 56). South Vietnam's President Thieu resigned on 7 April 1975, publicly declaring that the U.S. had betrayed his country (BBC 2010).

Following the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975, North and South Vietnam were forcibly reunited as a communist state. The North Vietnamese replaced South Vietnamese officials throughout the country with their own, and the society was

reorganized to model the North. Hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese officials, military officers, and intelligentsia were sent to re-education camps and the North completed their domination over the South (FitzGerald 2009, 56). The underlying strategic objective for which the U.S. entered the war—to stop the spread of communism—was lost. Although the U.S. had accomplished its stated objective of defeating the NLF, the overarching strategic goal of stopping communism had failed. Adding insult to injury, Cambodia then fell to Communist Khmer Rouge. The U.S. had spent over $250 billion on the war in Vietnam and sacrificed the lives of 58,193 service members, but had chosen to let South Vietnam fall instead of continuing to pay this price (J. Clarke 1998; Corson 1974, 142).

The cost of protracted withdrawal through Vietnamization was high on the United States. The effect on the U.S. military was undeniable. The U.S. Army had significant internal problems with drugs, racial violence, and discipline. After reaching deep into the society of the U.S. through a mandated draft, the military still proved unable to achieve victory. The results of the apparent loss in Vietnam impacted far more than just the military forces involved. The society of America was shaken, slowly coming to realize that it had been dealt its first defeat (FitzGerald 2009, 54).

The strategic impact of the withdrawal also had a lasting impact on American international relations. For decades after Vietnam, Americans approached international involvements with a high degree of skepticism. Despite having the world's most powerful military, America experienced a rise of isolationist thinking. Particularly in conflicts involving counterinsurgencies or lacking clear military objectives, both U.S. military officials and the politicians committing them were slow to become

internationally involved. Although the U.S. did still become involved in some foreign conflicts (particularly in South America), the overall impact on U.S. policy was felt through a hesitance to become involved in many other world crises. The U.S. military all but ignored counterinsurgency doctrine and training, instead wishing away the likelihood of facing such an atrocious form of warfare again. Instead of focusing on becoming better at counterinsurgency, the U.S. developed cautious doctrine such as the Powell Doctrine prescribing overwhelming military force.

The strategic political effect of the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam played out over many years. Short term effects included the violent fall of South Vietnam and a broken relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam. Formal relations between the U.S. and Vietnam ceased for 17 years after the U.S. withdrawal. However, over the long term, the strategic effect turned out differently. In 1992 the U.S. began diplomatic relations with Vietnam through a U.S. consulate, in 1994 the U.S. ended its embargo on Vietnam, in 1995 the U.S. formally recognized Vietnam, and in 1996 the U.S. sent a permanent ambassador to Vietnam (Frankum and Maxner 2003, 345). As of this writing, Vietnam represents a major trading partner with the U.S. and is a political ally of the U.S. within Southeast Asia.

Lessons Learned

Many lessons may be drawn from the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. This section will focus on four general lessons learned from the withdrawal process at the strategic level. Although more lessons may be drawn, the lessons described here are those that have the greatest potential for overall applicability outside of this specific conflict.

Lesson #1: Local Conditions Unexpectedly Alter Intervention Objectives

The U.S. achieved one of its primary goals for which it originally entered Vietnam—assisting the South Vietnamese government in defeating the NLF—while failing in its overarching goal of stopping the spread of communism. However, as is common in many conflicts over time, the nature of the conflict and the objectives of the imposing nation changed. Although the NLF was defeated, the entrance of U.S. forces to South Vietnam altered the political environment and the North Vietnamese became increasingly involved. Therefore, success in achieving the U.S. goal of defeating the NLF no longer represented the victory that it originally appeared to be. Despite the attainment of this goal, the South Vietnamese government continued to be threatened due to the new circumstances. When a foreign nation introduces troops into a conflict, this act will likely change the nature of the conflict. Although the U.S. entered Vietnam with the goal of defeating the internal National Liberation Front, the attainment of this goal by 1971 did not represent a true victory when the regular army of North Vietnam became the primary threat (FitzGerald 2009, 54).

Lesson #2: Conflict Extrication is a Sticky Business

During the presidential campaign of 1968, President Nixon ran for the presidency on a policy of peace with honor—an expeditious end to the Vietnam War. However, he was unable to completely withdraw U.S. troops for another seven years. The withdrawal became ‘sticky,’ or difficult to withdraw from, as his efforts to preserve national honor during the withdrawal process led to prolonging the war. He first made extraordinary attempts to end the war through expansion to neighboring nations, then through a process of Vietnamization, then finally withdrew despite the impending victory of the North

(FitzGerald 2009, 53). Furthermore, policies to train local security forces did not ensure victory. Although the South Vietnamese military was better equipped than North Vietnam's military by 1971, the South Vietnamese were nevertheless militarily defeated. The levels of competency and discipline of a security force must be considered when newly established forces are likely to become immediately tested in combat.

Lesson #3: Governments are Difficult to Sustain Externally

Another lesson learned from the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam is the difficulty of supporting a government externally. The U.S. supported the Saigon government in 1954 after the French withdrew, but it was not viewed internally as politically legitimate (FitzGerald 2009, 53). South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem fell to a military junta in 1963, and the Saigon government after that was heavily reliant on U.S. aid and guidance for survival. Lacking internal support, the government of South Vietnam fell when tested in combat against the North.

Lesson #4: Agreements May be Broken

Bilateral or even international agreements to withdraw forces are risky for a large foreign power. When the U.S. agreed to withdraw, it did so without the ability to either break its promise or quickly redeploy if North Vietnam violated its terms. North Vietnam could attack the South with little or no advanced warning, and the U.S. was thousands of miles away without an immediate response capability. Furthermore, the U.S. had political constraints that prevented a renewed effort in South Vietnam. When agreements for withdrawal are constructed, the potential for breaking the agreement and associated ramifications must be considered.

The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan

Basic Background of the Conflict

At the alleged invitation of the Marxist government of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union fought in Afghanistan for approximately nine years from 27 December 1979 to 15 February 1989 (BBC 2009). The oft-overthrown government of Afghanistan requested Soviet assistance to defeat the Islamic mujahedeen, who were supported by external powers (to include the United States) as a front of the Cold War. The government of Afghanistan had recently enacted secular policies, which angered traditional Islamists within Afghanistan. To control the uprisings, the Afghan government executed tens of thousands of Afghans to include tribal and religious elders that resisted the government's policies. Despite the harsh tactics, the Afghan government was losing control of its population and requested Soviet assistance. See figure 2 for a map of Afghanistan. Of note, the nations of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan on Afghanistan's northern border were all members of the Soviet Union during the period of this case study (1979 to 1989).

Figure 2. Map of Afghanistan
Source: Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook, Afghanistan*, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html (accessed 15 May 2010).

The Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan with the goal of helping the Afghan government defeat the anticommunist mujahedeen resistance. However, it entered Afghanistan with too much confidence: "[t]he Soviet leadership was sure that if only the Soviet troops would step into the territory of Afghanistan . . . the opposition would immediately become manageable" (Sarin and Dvoretsky 1993, 43). The Soviet leadership erroneously assumed a stronger Afghan government, a weaker mujahedeen resistance, and therefore a far shorter conflict.

The Soviet Union sent approximately 100,000 service members to Afghanistan in over six combat divisions (Russian General Staff 2002, 26). The Soviets quickly retook

major population areas in the name of the Afghan government, but their presence spawned a nationalistic and Islamic insurgency. As the war progressed, Soviet forces continued to control cities while the mujahedeen controlled the countryside.

In 1985, after President Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union, Soviet forces in Afghanistan surged to 108,800 service members with the intent of quickly ending the conflict (Russian General Staff 2002, 26). However, after the surge failed to prevent mujahedeen forces from controlling rural areas and the Soviet Union faced increasing internal pressures, Soviet troops withdrew from the seemingly endless conflict.

Withdrawal Strategy

By the end of 1986, the Soviets realized that the end of their involvement in Afghanistan would not come by military victory. This spurred the first phase of the Soviet withdrawal process: peace negotiations. National reconciliation became the new focus and the Soviets prompted Geneva accords which mandated the end of foreign assistance to the mujahedeen. As part of the reconciliatory effort, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed a mutual agreement of non-interference and non-intervention (Wahab and Youngerman 2007, 169). However, reconciliation between the Afghan government and the mujahedeen fighters failed largely due to the jihad that was declared in response to the presence of Soviet troops on Afghan soil.

Like the U.S. strategy of Vietnamization, the Soviets came up with a second phase in its withdrawal effort that centered on empowering the Afghans to be militarily self-sufficient. From 1985 to 1987, the Soviet forces focused primarily on indirect support towards a strengthened Afghan military and not direct military action (Russian General Staff 2002, 13). The Soviet forces created Afghan self-defense detachments

through a process of negotiations with the rural tribal elders. The Soviet strategy leveraged the security apparatus that already existed in the tribal-based society against the mujahedeen forces. Although the existing self-defense detachments were largely independent, the Soviets attempted to make these quasi-military forces responsive to the central government instead of resolute against it (Russian General Staff 2002, 27). The Soviets built Afghan military forces up to over 300,000 troops by 1986, plus additional forces within the ministry of interior and security departments.

From 1987 to 1989, the Soviets engaged in very little combat and executed the third phase of their withdrawal strategy: the actual withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Even during these years, however, the Soviets still responded with military force when necessary to reinforce the Afghan government. The most notable example of this was Operation Magistral, where the Soviets attained a symbolic victory by temporarily clearing Khowst and Gardez of mujahedeen. A firm timeline for withdrawal was published by the Soviets on 7 April 1988. They would withdraw in three discreet phases: (1) from 15 May to 16 August 1988, the Soviet forces would draw down by 50 percent, (2) the withdrawal would pause for three months, and then (3) from 15 November 1988 to 15 February 1989, the Soviet troops would complete their withdrawal (Russian General Staff 2002, 29).

The Soviet forces conducted their withdrawal strategy according to plan with no casualties. While some troops departed, other troops served to block by securing lines of communication and pressuring the mujahedeen. Soviet night camps were covered and illuminated by Soviet aviation. After the first wave of withdrawal, remaining troops shifted their mission to concentrating solely on aiding Afghan armed forces. Despite the

Afghan government's requests to delay the Soviet departure, the Soviet Union held firmly to their withdrawal timeline (Sarin and Dvoretsky 1993, 128).

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was generally peaceful largely due to multiple agreements with mujahedeen commanders that established safe passage. The Soviet forces withdrew under Geneva accord brokered conditions that promised non-intervention in Afghanistan by both the Soviet Union and the United States. By 15 February 1989, Soviet troops had completely withdrawn from Afghanistan. Surprisingly, the Afghan government was able to stand on its own after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The Soviets bolstered the Afghan government through generous aid packages including thousands of Soviet advisors and large sums of military hardware, food, and fuel. However, this stopped on 1 January 1991 due to the Soviet Union's internal struggle for existence. Without this stimulus, the Afghan government began to crumble until it finally fell to the mujahedeen on 15 April 1992 (Rais 1994, 113).

Withdrawal Strategic Impact

After the Soviet Union withdrew in 1989, the Afghan government was strong enough to maintain control despite attacks from the mujahedeen. The Afghan government continued to receive aid and arms from the Soviet Union until the Soviets' collapse in 1991. The Afghan government actually grew stronger during the Soviet Union's absence than it ever had been when the Soviet forces were physically occupying Afghanistan. However, when Afghan general Abdul Rashid Dostum switched alliances from the Afghan government to the mujahedeen in 1992, Kabul fell to his combined forces (Wahab and Youngerman 2007, 169).

The Soviet Union left Afghanistan in 1989 under what they saw as ideal circumstances: a strong central government along with a military capable of defending the country. However, this government only lasted three years before falling to the mujahedeen. The mujahedeen then created a similar set of circumstances in Afghanistan for which the Soviet Union originally entered the conflict. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and the subsequent fall of the Afghan government, the mujahedeen took control of Afghanistan from 1992 to 1996 followed by the Taliban from 1996 to 2001 (Wahab and Youngerman 2007, 195-212).

The Taliban enacted burdensome religious laws including dress codes that forced women to be totally covered when leaving the house and only with the company of a male escort. Furthermore, girls were banned from education, men had regulatory minimum beard lengths, and stoning and executions became common (Wahab and Youngerman 2007, 218). This environment set the stage for the rise of Osama bin Laden, once again spurring international military intervention within Afghanistan. The Soviet Union's experience in Afghanistan is often referred to as the Soviet's Vietnam. According to a book published by the Russian Staff, the Soviet-Afghan war "took the lives or health of 55,000 Soviet citizens and did not result in the desired victory for the government" (Russian General Staff 2002, 1).

The strategic effect of the withdrawal upon the Soviet Union was drastic. As with the U.S. loss in Vietnam, the Soviet's national pride was greatly damaged by being forced to withdraw to another power that was perceived as much weaker. Two years after this withdrawal, the Soviet Union collapsed. Although it would be erroneous to presume that the Afghan conflict brought about this collapse (causality is more likely to exist in

the opposite direction, as the weakening of the Soviet Union certainly impacted their decision to withdraw), the withdrawal unquestionable played into the weakening of the Soviet economy and national pride which contributed to its eventual collapse.

The strategic impact of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was also significant for the Afghans. Within Afghanistan, the Soviet withdrawal established a culture of violence that continues today. The mujahedeen violently overthrew the Kabul government in 1992, the Taliban violently overthrew them in 1996, and the Northern Alliance (with significant U.S. assistance) violently overtook the government in 2001. Such a cycle of violence has left Afghanistan with hundreds of thousands of killed and maimed individuals, primarily male. The millions of mines left over from the Soviet involvement remains a great threat to Afghan children and adults even today, making individuals with missing limbs a common sight in Afghanistan. The impact upon the economy is certain to be enormous as Afghanistan continues to be one of the poorest nations in the world.

Lessons Learned

As with the Vietnam case study, many lessons may be drawn from the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. This study focuses on the strategic lessons that may be drawn from the actual withdrawal process that are general enough to apply in other environments. Two of the lessons learned from the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam were found again in the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, while two new lessons emerged.

Lesson #1: Local Conditions Unexpectedly Alter Intervention Objectives

The very involvement of Soviet troops within Afghanistan changed the nature of the conflict. According to Sarin and Dvortsky, "The Soviet troops' invasion of Afghanistan actually stirred up the whole country" (1993, 44). With the presence of foreigners—particularly non-Muslims—the insurgency was able to greatly expand its recruitment base. This new resistance was far greater than the original resistance the secular Afghan government had faced, and changed the nature of the Afghan war in ways that the Soviet Union had not foreseen. Not only did the nature of the conflict change over the nine years of Soviet involvement, but the mere presence of a great power within Afghanistan changed the conflict's internal dynamics.

Lesson #2: Conflict Extrication is a Sticky Business

As in Vietnam, withdrawing was not as simple or quick as leaders desired. Soviet President Gorbachev expressed his intent to withdraw in 1985, yet it took until 1989 to complete. Part of this delay was due to his efforts to save political face in turning to the United Nations (UN) to negotiate a withdrawal that would not be seen as a defeat (Wahab and Youngerman 2007, 169). The Soviet decision to withdraw originated largely from a lack of internal support for the war. Although peace accords were used to legitimize the withdrawal, the Soviets had decided to withdraw regardless of the result of the accords (Rais 1994, 135).

Lesson #3: Withdrawals May Occur Unimpeded

One valuable lesson of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was that withdrawals from continuing conflicts may occur unimpeded. Despite a published

withdrawal schedule and limited exfiltration paths, the Soviet Union was able to conduct a safe withdrawal that was virtually unimpeded by the mujahedeen. Although this was partly due to agreements made with mujahedeen leaders, another critical factor was that the objectives of the mujahedeen were being met through the Soviet withdrawal.

Lesson #4: Short-Term Results Vary Sharply with Long-Term Results

Mostly due to Soviet training and assistance, by 1989 the Afghan Army achieved the requisite level of professional competency to maintain control of their country. The strength of the Afghan government and military actually grew after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, and mujahedeen attacks were successfully defeated in Kabul and elsewhere until 1992. However, short-term success did not lead to long-term success. Although the Afghan government stood independently against the mujahedeen for three years after the Soviet withdrawal, this did not bring about long-term success. Despite initial strength, the Afghan government was not able to maintain its authority without Soviet aid and it was overthrown in 1992. The fall of the Afghan government to the mujahedeen created conditions equal to those for which the Soviets intervened, making the involvement a long-term failure.

The United States Withdrawal from Somalia

Basic Background of the Conflict

The UN and U.S. intervention in Somalia in 1991 occurred under significantly different circumstances than the previous case studies. Following independence from Great Britain in 1960, Somalia has experienced near-continual internal conflicts. In 1991, a political upheaval created the conditions for a civil war that left over 20,000 Somalis

dead or wounded and an estimated 350,000 Somalis starving to death. Faced with a massive humanitarian disaster, the UN authorized a limited peacekeeping operation to assist with food distribution—United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) I (Mroczkowski 2005, 8).

In August of 1992, the U.S. became involved in Somalia under UN authority to provide food relief to then approximately three million starving Somalis. Operation Provide Relief (humanitarian assistance) in August 1992 led to Operation Restore Hope (protect humanitarian activities) in December 1992 with the U.S. in the lead of UN efforts. U.S. Marines secured major portions of Mogadishu, the port, and the airport to enable humanitarian supply deliveries (Stewart 1994, 4-5). See figure 3 for a map of Somalia.

The lack of effective Somali governance and consequential threat to UN aid workers drove the UN to authorize UNOSOM II—a broader mission of security and state building. One particular rebel faction led by General Mohammed Farrah Aideed killed 24 Pakistani UN forces on 5 June 1993 (Stewart 1994, 12). The UN responded by calling for General Aideed's arrest, and U.S. forces raided his house in Mogadishu on 12 July 1993. U.S. forces fired on General Aideed's safe house, but killed 73 clan leaders meeting at his house in the process (Bruton 2009). Having thoroughly upset the Somali population by killing elders who they viewed as attempting to find a peaceful solution, Mogadishu became a far more dangerous place for U.S. forces.

Figure 3. Map of Somalia
Source: Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook, Somalia*, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html (accessed 15 May 2010).

On 3 October 1993, U.S. forces attempted a raid in Mogadishu to capture two of Aideed's top lieutenants. However, the operation faced fierce resistance within Mogadishu culminating with Aideed's forces shooting down two U.S. Blackhawk helicopters (Stewart 1994, 17). In recovery efforts, 18 U.S. soldiers were killed and 83 injured (PBS 1998). President Clinton ordered an immediate end to U.S. offensive actions and a full withdrawal within six months.

The goals of the U.S. in Somalia shifted by UN mandate and over time. The original mission of U.S. forces was to assist in delivering humanitarian supplies. The subsequent mission was securing the delivery of humanitarian supplies within Somalia.

The final mission became securing Somalia from the rebel faction led by General Aideed, which led to direct armed engagement between his militia and the U.S. military. When the U.S. departed in 1994, it had partially succeeded at delivering humanitarian supplies within Somalia, failed at securing those supplies after 1993, and failed at securing the Somali government or people from rebel factions.

Withdrawal Strategy

The U.S. withdrawal from Somalia was not a direct result of the Battle of Mogadishu on 3 October 1993. Prior to this, the U.S. was already showing signs that it intended to withdraw from Somalia. U.S. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin tasked senior policy advisor Clark Murdock to attend a Somalia working group on 27 September 1993, who then proposed that the U.S. immediately exit Somalia (Poole 2005, 55). This report was scheduled for release on 3 October, the same day the battle in Mogadishu occurred. Many U.S. officials disagreed over the timeline and subsequent effect that withdrawal timelines had on the U.S., UN, and Somalia. On 28 September 1993, Lieutenant General McCaffrey (assistant Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) sent a letter to the General Powell (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) detailing a planned withdrawal from Somalia with three options: (1) withdrawing by 15 November (45 days) without leaving UNOSOM a viable force, (2) leaving by 1 January 1994 (90 days) giving UNOSOM a fair chance for future viability in Somalia, or (3) withdrawing by 1 April 1994 (180 days) and fulfilling the U.S. commitment to UNOSOM while leaving them a reasonable probability of success (Poole 2005, 54).

The debate over the disposition of troops within Somalia did not end with Lieutenant General McCaffrey's letter. On 30 September, General Powell's last day as

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chairman made the case to President Clinton that the situation in Somalia was unraveling and urged an immediate troop withdrawal (Poole 2005, 56). However, no immediate decision was made and the battle of Mogadishu occurred on 3 October—the same day the Joint Staff concurred with Lieutenant General McCaffrey's option three to withdraw forces by 1 April 1994.

Three days after the battle of Mogadishu, President Clinton ordered U.S. forces to cease offensive actions and announced a U.S. withdrawal from Somalia within six months. The guidance to the commanding general, Major General Montgomery, was to "protect the force, protect the UN, and bring the force out with minimal casualties" (Stewart 1994, 20). On 6 October 1993, President Clinton ordered acting Chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Jeremiah to stop all actions by U.S. forces against Aideed except those necessary for self-defense (Stewart 1994, 20). Instead of completing the mission of defeating General Aideed, President Clinton made an immediate decision to withdraw U.S. forces. Unlike the previous two case studies, this withdrawal was relatively abrupt.

In the process of withdrawal, additional troops were deployed to Somalia to prevent catastrophes in the withdrawal process. On 7 October, President Clinton announced that 1,700 additional troops were headed to Somalia with 104 armored vehicles. In his speech, President Clinton defined the new U.S. mission and exit strategy from Somalia in four steps: (1) protect our troops and bases, (2) secure infrastructure required for the flow of relief supplies, (3) keep the pressure on anyone threatening the infrastructure for relief supplies "not to personalize the conflict but to prevent a return to

anarchy," and (4) make it possible for the Somali people to reach internal agreements for stability (Poole 2005, 59).

President Clinton did make some effort to secure strategic objectives in Somalia after the attack on U.S. forces, but not with military force. U.S. Ambassador Oakley was immediately reappointed as a special envoy to Somalia with the task to broker a peace settlement as well as announce the withdrawal timeline of 31 March 1994. This action was swift, and Ambassador Oakley arrived in Mogadishu on 9 October. He successfully negotiated with General Aideed's forces the release of a U.S. and Nigerian soldier on 14 October, yet achieved little else after this (Stewart 1994, 20).

Lieutenant General McCaffrey attempted to follow President Clinton's four steps to the fullest, and not merely protect U.S. troops during the withdrawal. In addition to requesting additional troops, Lieutenant General McCaffrey also sought to revitalize the effort to quickly create a national police force within Somalia and to civilianize the logistical process for redeployment (Poole 2005, 60). However, such efforts faced major bureaucratic challenges in the U.S. and UN structure and only the logistical efforts came to fruition.

Political negotiations with General Aideed occurred throughout the withdrawal process. The concept of negotiating with General Aideed was highly contentious in the U.S. and UN commands. Negotiations happened regardless, and by 10 October General Aideed had agreed to a cease-fire. General Aideed later signed an agreement guaranteeing reconciliation and reconstruction, but this agreement proved short-lived as his forces soon began to seize UN stockpiles and disarm UNOSOM remnants (Poole 2005, 67). Chaos ensued for those attempting to evacuate Somalia. A Zimbabwean

company was surrounded and forced to surrender their weapons and equipment as a prerequisite to leaving, and Egyptian forces were conditionally allowed to exit Mogadishu only if they forfeited their equipment. Somalia had reverted to a political state akin to or worse than the anarchy that reigned prior to the UN intervention (Poole 2005, 67).

The U.S. Joint Task Force Somalia was activated on 20 October with the express mission of preparing for the withdrawal of U.S. forces (Poole 2005, 61). This signified that all debate regarding the status of U.S. forces in Somalia was over, and the U.S. would unequivocally execute a near-term withdrawal. Despite this singular plan the U.S. followed, disagreement existed over whether withdrawing was beneficial to U.S. strategic interests. Although many viewed a continued UN and U.S. presence as a moral obligation, others believed that no outside force should control Somalia. Major General Montgomery illustrated this viewpoint when he stepped down as Deputy UNOSOM Commander on 7 February 1994, announcing that "it's time to get out. At some point in time you've got to stand up and take responsibility and Somalis will not take responsibility" (Poole 2005, 66).

Throughout the process of withdrawing from Somalia, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was concerned with how the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia would be perceived. In justifying the withdrawal, he specifically considered the initial goals of the UN and U.S. intervention. He purported that a withdrawal was advisable because the U.S. and UN had accomplished their original mission of providing aid and could therefore declare a victory (Poole 2005, 66).

The U.S. then withdrew from Somalia in a phased approach, which ultimately led to looting and chaos. A few hundred marines remained off the coast of Somalia as a quick reaction force designed to evacuate U.S. non-combatants (Stewart 1994, 21). The UN followed the U.S. lead and completed its withdrawal by 3 March 1995. The time gap between the U.S. and UN withdrawals (March 1994 to March 1995) allowed pandemonium to break out—a total loss of security, a consequent lack of ability for basic commerce, and rampant faction warfare (Press 1995).

Withdrawal Strategic Impact

The UN and U.S. efforts in Somalia did not at first appear set on failure. In late 1993, the U.S. had accomplished much of its objectives: starvation had largely been stopped and hundreds of thousands of people were no longer in danger of an imminent death. To achieve these objectives, the U.S. faced 32 killed, 172 wounded, and $1.3 billion spent (Poole 2005, 69). However, the devolving political situation yielded a slide toward disorder and anarchy that led to violence and a return to pre-deployment conditions by 1994 (Stewart 1994, 21). The combined UN and U.S. operations did not simply impact Somalia by delaying the starvation and chaos that was already underway in 1992. Through their actions, the UN and U.S. also negatively impacted the internal politics and potential for stability within Somalia.

Negotiations with General Aideed in the process of the U.S. withdrawal yielded his emergence as the winner within Somalia in the Joint Task Force Somalia's Intelligence Officer's assessment (Poole 2005, 64). In addition to empowering Aideed through direct talks, the U.S. showed that it considered him a highly important person. Ambassador Oakley allowed General Aideed to use his assigned U.S. Army C-12 aircraft

to travel to Ethiopia for negotiations, and the warrant on Aideed was lifted (Poole 2005, 64).

Somalia remains in a state of chaos with the lack of a central government and the absence of a police force (Prusher 1997). The UN and U.S. withdrawal in the face of violence added to the preexisting conditions within Somalia that encouraged the authority of warlords and violence instead of the legitimate rule of law. The UN and U.S. withdrawal from Somalia left it in a state of militant chaos where violence has remained the prevalent form of authority to this day. Consequentially, violence is exported through piracy along its coast and terrorism within Somalia often spurs international intervention by its neighbors. Somalia remains a U.S. and global problem, as its lawlessness provides known bases for terrorists to include Al Qaeda affiliates. As of the writing of this thesis Somalia remains politically unstable, has a high degree of Islamic fundamentalism, has anti-American sentiment, and is a known safe haven for Al Qaeda affiliates (Bruton 2009).

The abrupt withdrawal of U.S. forces from Somalia had far reaching impacts on the immediate future of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. was subsequently reluctant to use military forces in Third World conflicts. The U.S. experience in Somalia is widely believed to have had a great influence over America's hesitation to deploy troops to Rwanda in 1994—after the mass murder of an estimated 800,000 Rwandans (BBC 2008). With the memory of Somalia in their mind, U.S. decision makers have been extremely hesitant to deploy any U.S. troops into Africa. Despite horrific violence throughout multiple African nations and a contestable genocide within Sudan, the U.S. has chosen to simply not become involved. Even with the activation of Africa Command in 2008,

conventional U.S. troops remain outside of Africa except for a small contingent in Djibouti.

Lessons Learned

Lesson #1: Local Conditions Unexpectedly Alter Intervention Objectives

Although the UN mission in Somalia started off intent on stopping the imminent starvation of hundreds of thousands of people, it quickly turned into an armed conflict with rebel factions. U.S. forces were prepared for the former mission, and were succeeding at it until the nature of the conflict quickly changed in an unexpectedly violent way. As Walter Poole surmised, "the U.S. objective in Somalia proved to be a constantly shifting target" and the overall U.S. objective "really depended on how and by whom the mission was being defined at that moment" (Poole 2005, 70).

Lesson #2: Withdrawals May Occur Unimpeded

The withdrawal of U.S. forces from Somalia occurred virtually unimpeded. Partially attributable to negotiations with General Aideed, Joint Task Force Somalia succeeded at withdrawing U.S. forces without interference (Poole 2005, 64). However, the fact that U.S. forces were able to depart Somalia unimpeded does not mean that peace existed within Somalia. Although the violence in Mogadishu temporarily subsided through the course of short-lived peace agreements, the departure of U.S. forces allowed General Aideed to break these agreements and violence between warlords returned unchecked.

Lesson #3: The Dangers of Announcing the Timetable for Withdrawal

U.S. forces announced a clear timetable delineating exactly when they would withdraw. This timetable was intended primarily for domestic political consumption, but was certainly not lost on the factions within Somalia resisting the UN and U.S. forces. Instead of using this timeline to increase attacks on U.S. forces, General Aideed recognized that continuing to attack a withdrawing enemy would not serve his objectives. Desiring to control Somali politics, he partially acquiesced to UN and U.S. demands while they were present by attending peace negotiations and even signing agreements to cease violence. However, such actions merely served to facilitate the withdrawals without giving UN and U.S. decision makers reason to change their mind. After the foreign troops departed, General Aideed simply continued his campaign of violence without resistance.

Lesson #4: Withdrawals May Embolden Enemies Worldwide

The U.S. and then UN forces left abruptly in the face of a military loss in Somalia, sending a clear message to the world that the U.S. may be defeated through a relatively minor number of casualties. This lesson was not lost on potential future enemies of the United States. The Taliban in contemporary Afghanistan and insurgents in Iraq have continually used this lesson to justify their resistance as potentially victorious over the long term.

Summary

The U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia were explored to determine the strategic effects that

the withdrawal strategy had on the withdrawing nation. These three case studies were studied to answer the following secondary research questions:

RQ1: What lessons do the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

RQ2: What lessons do the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

RQ3: What lessons do the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia yield at the strategic level for potential relevance to other military withdrawals?

By exploring the lessons from these three case studies, the overall primary research question may now be addressed. The primary research question is: what lessons do selected case studies of historic withdrawals from unfinished conflicts yield at the strategic level for potential application to other military withdrawals? Chapter 5 will address this research question by synthesizing trends discovered in multiple cases and suggesting their potential application for future military withdrawals.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The exploration of withdrawal strategies used in three case studies revealed trends that larger nations encountered when conducting withdrawals. In each case, imposing nations seemed unaware of lessons that had been previously discovered. The purpose of this chapter is to present the trends observed throughout the case studies so they may be recognized as potentially applicable lessons to other withdrawing nations. This chapter therefore answers the primary research question: what lessons do selected case studies of historic withdrawals from unfinished conflicts yield at the strategic level for potential application to other military withdrawals? Chapter 5 will first present the conclusions that may be drawn from chapter 4, then make general recommendations for future withdrawal planners.

Conclusions

This study discovered four trends that existed in more than one case study.

Trend #1: Local Conditions Unexpectedly Alter Intervention Objectives

The nature of the conflict changed in all three case studies as foreign troops entered the scenario. The very problem that imposing nations came to solve changed when their troops arrived to solve it. In the case of the U.S. in Vietnam, the problem fundamentally shifted when the North Vietnamese military became the primary threat instead of the NLF. In Afghanistan, the conflict changed because the presence of Soviet troops caused the mujahedeen to expand their resistance. In Somalia, the nature of the

conflict changed when the original humanitarian mission came under attack and the UN authorized operations against General Aideed. Although the feuding warlords existed in Somalia prior to the introduction of UN troops, the vast influx of resources brought by these troops provided new resources for the warlords to fight over.

Trend #2: Conflict Extrication is a Sticky Business

In Vietnam, the U.S. decided to withdraw in 1968 yet took over five years to complete the withdrawal. In Afghanistan, the Soviets decided to withdraw in 1985 but took four years to do so. In both cases, the withdrawals were delayed in hopes of achieving minimally acceptable criteria. Neither nation entered the conflict imagining that their commitment would be near as long as it was. Contemporary theorists have called this well-documented phenomenon mission creep and it continues to occur despite its recognition. In both cases, politicians allowed the protracted involvement of their nation's troops due to a false belief that they could reach more favorable circumstances for the withdrawal. Both the U.S. and Soviets incorrectly believed that they could withdraw under more favorable conditions if they prolonged their exit. In both cases, the eventual withdrawal proved just as damaging as a short-term withdrawal would likely have been. The results of the Somalia case study suggest that a fast withdrawal does not necessarily bring about a more successful result than a slow withdrawal. However, a fast withdrawal is likely to be far less costly to the imposing nation than a protracted withdrawal with no discernable difference in benefit.

Trend #3: Withdrawals May Occur Unimpeded

In both Afghanistan and Somalia, occupying powers were able to withdraw their troops without fighting their way out of the country. In Afghanistan, Soviet military leaders negotiated directly with the mujahedeen for safe passage through their areas during the withdrawal. The negotiations were very successful in the short run (the Soviets avoided additional casualties during the withdrawal), yet in the long term the effect was empowering the mujahedeen with political power. The U.S. followed a similar process while withdrawing from Somalia. U.S. Ambassador Oakley negotiated directly with the enemy, General Aideed. U.S. troops were permitted a casualty-free passage out of Somalia (although other U.N. forces were forced to abandon some of their equipment), yet General Aideed was bolstered with political power that propelled him to a status of chief warlord after our departure.

Trend #4: Governments are Difficult to Sustain Externally

In Vietnam, the perceived illegitimacy of the South Vietnamese government hindered its ability to coherently resist the North. Without a legitimate authority to turn governance over to, the U.S. simply could not withdraw without destabilizing the nation. Similarly in Somalia, a legitimate government did not exist to continue humanitarian or security functions after the U.S. and UN departed. As documented by generals and politicians, no legitimate government existed within Somalia to empower following the withdrawal. This trend also held significance in the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, yet was mitigated through a concerted and partially successful effort by the Soviets to establish a strong Afghan government prior to their departure.

Trend #5: Short-Term Results Vary Sharply with Long-Term Results

In the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the short term result was catastrophic to the failed South Vietnamese government and people. Likewise, the withdrawal significantly impacted the U.S. both internally and externally. However, both Vietnam and the U.S. were able to recover to the point of normal and even healthy international relations. The results of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghan fared differently. The Soviet Union collapsed soon afterward due to a variety of factors. Although the withdrawal from Afghanistan was a contributor to some degree, the withdrawal was more likely a consequence of the Soviet's impending collapse. Afghanistan did not recover from the withdrawal, and fell to the mujahedeen followed by the Taliban. Twelve years later, the chaotic environment within Afghanistan spurred the U.S. to intervene. The U.S. withdrawal from Somalia initially cost the U.S. little, yet the impact has grown over time through U.S. foreign policy implications and by creating a terrorist safe haven. The consequences within Somalia were far more catastrophic. As of this writing, Somalia continues to exist as a nation contested between warlords and without a formidable central government. In each case, the effect of the withdrawal on the imposing nation was relatively minor (particularly in the long term), but the effect on the host nation was far more significant and often devastating.

In addition to the aforementioned trends, other minor trends were found. In each case study, the U.S. and Soviet Union withdrew after they determined that the cost of involvement remained too high when compared to the potential benefit from the involvement, there was no perceived end in sight, and the domestic support for the intervention had significantly eroded (J. Clarke, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2009). Each of these

withdrawals also had the effect of emboldening smaller powers with the idea that they could stand up to a superpower and win—if only they had the patience to outlast the superpower.

Significance

The trends discovered in this study are worthy of consideration for future withdrawal strategists. The first trend (local conditions unexpectedly alter intervention objectives) indicates that imposing nations cannot simply create a withdrawal plan that will remain consistent for one or two years—the conflict itself is likely to change in that time period. This trend suggests that conditions surrounding a withdrawal will change before the withdrawal is completed. Therefore, the imposing nations will have to either adapt and potentially delay their withdrawal or accept a withdrawal under conditions divergent from their original plan. The second trend (conflict extrication is a sticky business) suggests how politically difficult that withdrawals are likely to be, and the danger of continuing to delay the inevitable withdrawal in search of a better solution. In two case studies, withdrawal decisions were postponed far beyond initial expectations in hopes that the imposing nation could save face both domestically and internationally. Such outcomes failed to materialize, and the eventual withdrawal was conducted without these desired conditions.

The third trend (withdrawals may occur unimpeded) suggests that the narrow focus of protecting troops in the withdrawal process may have a negative long-term effect on the politics of the host nation. When leaders turn to negotiations with their enemies as a way of ensuring their safe passage, the enemy often accepts their offer. In the short-term, withdrawing forces get what they are looking for—a safe withdrawal. However,

negotiation with the enemy empowers them politically. When the occupying forces depart, a power vacuum is left that the enemy simply fills. Although the negotiations fulfill the short-term desires of withdrawing forces, they negatively affect the long-term well-being of the imposing power by politically empowering their enemy.

The fourth trend (governments are difficult to sustain externally) has strong potential relevance for future withdrawal planners. Each case study revealed a weakness in the abilities of the local government. This weakness greatly hindered the imposing nations in the three case studies. In each case, the lack of legitimacy of the host government significantly impacted the withdrawal timeline and effect of the withdrawal. The government of Vietnam fell soon after the U.S. withdrawal, the Afghan government stood for a limited time due to contested legitimacy, and Somalia immediately fell to chaos due to the lack of a viable government. Complicating the lack of internal legitimacy in Afghanistan was the loss of external aid by the Soviet Union. Although these are distinct factors, they are closely tied through the ability to provide for and control citizens. Each case suggests that the long-term key to withdrawing successfully rests on the abilities of the local government to maintain control after the withdrawal.

The fifth trend (short-term results vary sharply with long-term results) suggests that the impact of a withdrawal on an imposing nation is not as large as it initially appears. Although U.S. planners in Vietnam and the Soviets in Afghanistan were initially consumed with a fear of catastrophic consequences post withdrawal, this did not occur as a result of their withdrawals. The consequences for the imposing nation were short lived, suggesting that strategic decision makers often overestimate the effect of a withdrawal on the long-term interests of their nation.

The results from these case studies complement the existing literature reviewed in chapter 2. While chapter 2 found sufficient literature on the decision to withdraw, this study contributed to the body of literature on how withdrawal strategy affects the interests of the imposing nation. The research did not unearth any unexpected findings, but did reveal trends based on a historic foundation for future military withdrawal planners to consider.

Recommendations

The relationship between withdrawal strategy and results attained in the selected case studies yield far-reaching implications for future military withdrawal planners. These lessons are distilled into five main recommendations for future withdrawal planners to consider when determining a strategy for withdrawal. These recommendations are not prescriptive, and must be understood as merely factors to consider based on an extremely small sample size of limited statistical significance. Each lesson is derived from an aforementioned trend.

1. Local conditions are likely to significantly shift upon the entrance of foreign troops, and this shift is difficult to predict. Before committing troops, decision makers must consider that the scope of the conflict is likely to shift and determine a maximum level of involvement that remains within their national interest. After a conflict has begun, the nature of the conflict may easily sway decision makers into committing more resources than their national interest initially called for.

2. Postponing a withdrawal while seeking better withdrawal conditions is ill-advised. Postponement is likely to lead to protracted involvement with an inevitable withdrawal under similar or even worse conditions.

3. Negotiations with one's enemy in the withdrawal process significantly damage the imposing nation's long-term interests. Avoiding negotiations may lead to more casualties in the short-term, yet the long-term effects of such negotiations are far more detrimental.

4. Withdrawal efforts should focus primarily upon building the local government's capacity and less on defeating insurgents or building infrastructure.

5. The long-term effect of a withdrawal on the imposing nation is likely to be less than feared, and may therefore be given less weight in the political decision making process. The effect on the occupied nations, however, could be far more severe in the short term and potentially the long term.

Recommendations for Further Study

A recommendation for future studies brought to light by this research is applying a similar methodology but using different case studies. The field of study surrounding strategic withdrawal strategies remains understudied, and applying different case studies would likely expand upon lessons learned from this study. Of particular relevance would be studying cases of successful withdrawals to extrapolate what withdrawal strategies lead to a positive effect on the national goals of the parties involved.

A further recommendation is approaching case studies from a different methodological approach. Instead of applying qualitative research to a few case studies, more may be gained by using a quantitative approach with far more case studies. By comparing dozens of case studies over time, a researcher could establish the significance of various lessons. Research on how cultural, religious, and other variables specific to a conflict impact the withdrawal may also prove highly beneficial. Future military

operations will certainly present divergent circumstances than the case studies explored in this thesis, and will require a tailored approach to withdrawal.

Future studies could also change the focus of this study to discover different trends. This study approached withdrawals at the strategic level, yet there are certainly lessons to be learned at the operational and tactical level as well. This study revealed that withdrawals may occur unimpeded by enemy contact. This discovery merits far more study at the lower levels of war before applying to a conflict. Another beneficial approach is focusing on how domestic considerations influence withdrawal timelines. Strategies are often dictated by the available timeline, and this timeline is almost always linked to the pressures on the political decision makers directing a withdrawal.

Unanswered Questions

Throughout the course of this study, several questions arose that were outside the scope of the research. One of the most significant questions was how the U.S. may achieve different long-term results in its withdrawal from Afghanistan than the Soviet Union did in 1989. The parallels between the Soviet approach and the current U.S. approach in Afghanistan are astounding. Like the Soviet Union, the U.S. has gone through phases in Afghanistan in which it conducted the majority of the combat actions against the enemy, shifted focus to rural areas, and finally shifted to building a centralized Afghan security force capable of fighting the enemy themselves. Like the U.S. is attempting to do, the Soviets handed Afghanistan over to a trained and competent force as they departed. Like the U.S. will likely do, the Soviets continued to channel large amounts of aid to the Afghan government after its troops departed (until its collapse in 1991) to ensure it had an edge over anti-government forces. However, three years after

the Soviet Union departed, the government of Afghanistan fell to the mujahedeen. The mujahedeen pseudo-government fostered horrific domestic conditions which spurred the U.S. to take action 12 years later. How can the U.S. avoid falling into such a similar fate? The answer to this question, while outside the scope of this thesis, will certainly have long-term implications for the success of the proposed U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Another question that surfaced in this research was how domestic factors influence the withdrawal decision and timeline. Like the domestic conditions that fostered the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the U.S. currently faces the pressures of dwindling popular support, international protest, and economic realities to withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan. These crucial factors influence whether a nation withdraws and how fast that withdrawal takes place, yet remain outside the scope of this thesis.

Summary

While history does not repeat itself, trends drawn from history are certain to resurface under differing circumstances. This thesis used three historic case studies to discover lessons that imposing nations have learned at the strategic level from their withdrawal. Trends between case studies revealed that local conditions unexpectedly alter intervention objectives, conflict extrication is a sticky business, withdrawals may occur unimpeded, governments are difficult to sustain externally, and short-term results vary sharply with long-term results. These trends suggest that overly inflated concerns regarding the effect of a withdrawal on the imposing nation are common, yet rarely materialize. Withdrawal planners should therefore consider these lessons when making

decisions regarding their overall withdrawal strategy, where to focus resources before the withdrawal, the timeline for the withdrawal, and in dampening overinflated fears of long-term consequences on the imposing nation. In President Obama's 2010 National Security Strategy, he indicated his strategic goal of stability along with his imperative to quickly withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan (Obama 2010). This study suggests historic trends that may aid withdrawal planners in achieving both.

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